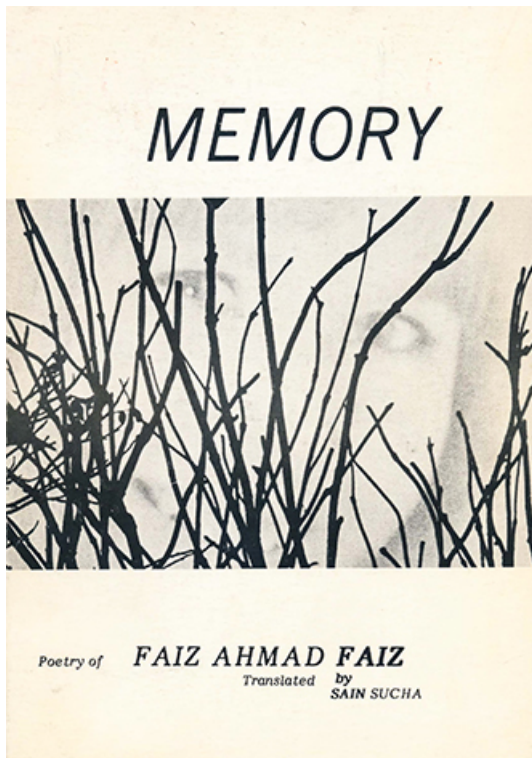


MEMORY



by

Faiz Ahmad Faiz

(All poems translated by Sain Sucha)

(A few changes are made in the poems from the book Memory,
and the versions here are to be considered as the final.)



Vudya Kitaban Förlag

Box 6099

192 06 Sollentuna

vudya@vudya.se

www.vudya.se

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E-book formatting Vudya Kitaban, Sollentuna

ISBN: 978-91-86620-52-3



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ربا سچیا

Introduction (1)

Perhaps your eyes shall apprehend one day,
Every soiled page, left blank by the arrest of Word.

Perhaps the banner of that song shall rise one day,
Which hangs low, yearning for the arrival of high wind.

Perhaps the beat of that heart shall reach you,
Which lies disgraced, like a stone on the pathway.

(Duste ´ Teh ´ Sung)

(2) **A lover to his beloved**

This path of memory,
On which you have walked for so long,
Will end, if your were to proceed a few steps more,
Where it diverts to oblivion's desolation
And from there onwards neither you nor I exist.
My eyes, still on you, wait that any instant,
You may return, pass on, or just look back.

Yet, I am aware,
That it is merely an illusion:
When I believe that if my eyes
 ever embrace you somewhere,
A new path shall erupt there;
And a similar encounter shall resume;
Under the fall of your locks,
The journey of my arms.

Then, the other situation is just a false,
Because my heart knows:
There is no diversion, desolation or hiding,
Which may conceal my beloved from me.
So, while this path erupts under your feet,
Let it be so;
And if you never even look back,
It doesn't matter.

(Zindan Nama)

(3) Let it be

Today,

If the breeze, in the garden of memory,

Wants to scatter the petals; then, let it be.

The pain, resting in some niche of the bygone age,

If wishes to kindle again; then, let it be.

Although you behave like a stranger now, so what;

Come and spend some time, face to face.

If we do meet, then afterwards,

The feeling of our loss shall intensify.

The exchange of few words between you and me,

Shall enhance the ambiguity of every word unsaid.

Neither of us shall refer to any promise,

Nor discuss fidelity or oppression.

If my eyes approach you, laden with tears,

To wash away the settled dust of the past,

You may respond, or choose to ignore them;

And words which make you avert the eyes,

You may rejoin, or choose to neglect them.

(Mere Dil Mere Musafir)

[4] **A word**

Today, again, the mind searches for a word:

A word

Imbued with wine or filled with venom,
Replete with love, or fraught with dread.

A word of affection:

Like a joyful glance –
One which carries the caress of soft, warm lips.
Brilliant – like a surge of the molten gold.
The very spring of excitement in the lovers' embrace.

A word of aversion:

Like a wrathful sword –
One which forever devastates the oppressors' strongholds.
Dark – like the night in a haunted graveyard.
The very utterance of it should burn my lips black.

(Shame´ Sher´ Yarañ)

^[5] **The moment to lament time's death**

The blue waters – Sky – stand still.

On the horizon has anchored,

Moon's pale coloured barque.

At the shore have landed,

All the sailors – every star.

The breath of leaves is choked,

The wind has fallen into a lull,

The gong demanding silence reverberates.

Then, stillness absorbed all the voices.

From the breast of dawn's nymph,

Fell the veil of darkness.

Instead,

Dark shadows of despair and loneliness

Have covered her whole being.

Yet, she is not aware of it.

No one is any longer aware, that at dusk,

When he left the town,

In which direction he proceeded;

There was no path, nor any goal.

No traveller, now,

Feels up to the journey.

This is a broken link of duration,

From the chain called as Day & Night –

This is the moment to lament Time's death.

On such occasion, quite subconsciously,
After removing the cloak of myself,
I too, sometimes, look at –
Those spots of rebuke,
And these blooms of affection.
Lines etched by running tears,
Stains left by the bleeding heart.
This rip scratched by the enemy's claw,
This image impressed by a friend's hand.
These jewels bestowed by tender lips,
These slashes gored by some evil tongue.

Still, this cloak,
My covering for day and night,
This torn mantle,
Is what I despise; yet, love.
At times frenzy demands:
“Rip it off, throw it away.”
And sometimes love whispers:
“Cherish it; hold it close to your heart.”

(Mere Dil Mere Musafir)

[6] **When spring came**

With the arrival of spring,
Returned, also, from oblivion,
All those dreams, and youthful memories,
Which had died for your lips,
They had died, but were born again.

And all those roses have opened,
Which are infused with the scent of your memory,
Imbrued with the blood of your lovers.

And all those torments have returned too –
Regrets and sufferings of the friends,
The drunkenness induced by the embrace of nymphs,
The pain recalled by the mind;
Your and mine.

And all the queries, the replies too,
With the arrival of spring have opened,
Once again all the accounts anew.

(Shame´ Sher´ Yarañ)

[7] **The evening**

It appears as if every tree is a temple:
An abandoned, desolate, ancient temple,
Looking for some pretence to fall apart,
Its edifice torn, the doors hanging loose.

The sky looks like an ascetic priest:
Its body ashen, a streak of the red on the forehead,
Sitting with his head bowed, no one knows since when.

One feels the presence of a sorcerer somewhere:
He has cast his spell on the heavens around,
The time's lap stitched to the lap of the evening.

Now
Neither the dusk will fall,
Nor the darkness arrive.
Neither the night will end,
Nor the dawn arise.

The sky waits hopefully, for this spell to break –
The chain of silence may snap,
The lap of time may become free.
That,
A trumpet would sound,
An anklet would clink
Some goddess might awake from her deep sleep,
Some damsel might lift the veil from her face.

(Duste' Teh' Sung)

[8] **Don't ask me my darling....**

Don't ask me my darling
For the love we had once.

I had then believed,
That you alone gave zest to life.
The thought of you,
Eclipsed other worries of the universe.
This face of yours,
Gave constancy to the realm of spring.
What else was there,
In the world, except your eyes?

If I were to win you,
Then Fate would be the loser.

It wasn't so,
Only I had wished it to be so.

There are other passions in life,
Besides that of love.
There are other gratifications in life,
Besides that of reunion.

These dark spells,
Which have stretched over countless years.
These human entrapments,

Woven from silk, satin and brocade.
These bodies for sale,
On display in the streets and back alleys.
These abandoned corpses,
Covered by dust, bathed in blood.

The mind keeps thinking of them;
What can I do?
Your beauty though still alluring;
Yet, what can I do?

There are other passions in life,
Besides that of love.
There are other gratifications in life,
Besides that of reunion.

Don't ask me my darling
For the live we had once.

(Nakshe ' Faryadi)

[9] Dogs

These stray dogs in the streets,
Begging – an endowment their only treat.
Curses from others, are their total effects,
Abuses by the world, are their only assets.
Neither rest at night, nor joy in the day,
Filth is their abode, in gutters do they lay.
If agitated, then turn them on one another,
A piece of dry bread will do this wonder.
Expected to be kicked around by every stranger,
Accustomed to wither away with lingering hunger.

If these poor beasts ever lift up their heads,
Mankind would, then, forget all deeds of rebellion.
If they decide, they can own the universe,
Even chew down the bones of their cruel masters.

Just make them aware of their degradation so deep
Just make them move their tail that has fallen asleep

(Nakshe' Furyadi)

[10] **You tell us what to do**

When

In the stream run with pain,
We entered with the barque of life,
How strong were our arms!
How crimson was the blood!
If felt as if with a stroke or two,
The boat should reach its port.

It wasn't so:

In every current
Were also hidden some undercurrents;
The rowers were rather naïve,
The oars were also untried.

Now

Try to analyse as much you like,
And blame as much you feel,
The stream is the same, as is the boat;
Tell us what is to be done,
How can we, now, land across?

When

In our breast,
We had observed the wounds of this land,
A lot of trust was put in the Curers,
A lot of prescriptions were also at hand.

It felt as if in a day or two,
All the ailments would disappear,
And, then, all the wounds should heal.

It didn't happen so:
The sicknesses we had were so old,
The Curers failed to make the diagnosis;
Thus, all their efforts went in vain.

Now
Try to analyse as much you like,
And blame as much you feel,
The breast is the same, as it the wound;
Tell us what is to be done,
How can we, now, heal the wound.

(Ghubare' Ayyam)

(11) **So close**

I awoke, with my eyes filled with your beauty –
The air refreshed, as if was your array.
The zephyr must have wandered through your bed-chamber,
My dawn is infused with the scent of your body.

(Daste 'Saba)

[12] **Not alone**

Imprisoned though we are, but not alone!
Everyday the breeze from the home-land's dawn,
Arrives imbued with the fragrance of memories,
And,
Returns laden with the pearls of tears.

(Zindan Namma)

[13] **The Trust**

The mind tells the heart incessantly –
So sweet is the life at this very moment;
The oppressors, with their venomous concocts,
Shall neither triumph today nor tomorrow.

(Dute 'Saba)

[14] **The meeting**

This night's tree stems from that pain,
Which is far greater than you and I.
It is greater because in its branches,
Caravans of millions of luminous stars
Came and, then, just withered away.
Thousands of moons, under its shadow,
Lost their lustre, broken with grief.

This night's tree stems from that pain,
Which is far greater than you and I.

But

From the tree if this very night,
Have fallen these few pale leaves of
The transient time and, after entangling
In your locks, turned into scarlet blossoms.
From its dew have also trickled,
These few drops of the silence
And became brilliants on your brow.

How very black is this night!
Yet, in its darkness one can see,
That rush of red – which is my call.
And, under its shadow is also radiant,
That golden wave – which is your glance.

This sorrow which smoulders to tepidly,
In the embrace of your soothing arms,
(the sorrow, which is an extract of this night)
Let it regain its heat by the warmth
In my sighs; and then be a flame again.

And, from the bows made out of its sticks,
All those arrows which were shot in the heart,
We have pulled them out, and then from
Each of them has made an axe for our purpose.

The daybreak for the unlucky and heartbroken,
Shall not arrive from the heavens above.
On this very spot where you and I stand,
Will rise the dawn, with its full splendour.
On this very spot appeared the buds of sorrow,
And metamorphosed into blossom at twilight.
It is here that the axes of devastating miseries,
After transforming into countless rays,
Have become garlands of dazzling fire.

The sorrow, which this night have bestowed!
This sorrow has evolved the faith in the dawn.

The faith which is far gracious than the sorrow,
The dawn which is far greater than the night.

(Zindan Namma)

[15] **No trace of blood**

Nowhere, there is any trace of blood!
Neither on the hands and nails of the slayer,
Nor any sign on the sleeve.
No redness in the dagger's edge,
Now any colour on the spear's head,
No stain in the earth's breast,
Or any smear on the ceiling.

Nowhere, there is any trace of blood!
It was
Not spent in service of kings,
To gin some bounty;
Nor offered in a religious rite,
To obtain absolution;
Nor spilled on the battlefield,
To attain fame – as inscription on a banner.

It cried for attention –
That unprotected, helpless blood.
Yet, none had time or the will –
To listen to that blood.
No accuser or any witness –
Just a “clean sheet”.
That blood from the figures of clay –
The Earth consumed it.

(Sire' Vadi' Sina)

(16) **Enchained by love**

With the hangman's rope around the neck,
The singers continued to sing each day.
On the jingles resounding from their fetters,
The dancers revelled in their own way.

We neither belonged to one row nor the other.
Standing there on the pathway –
We looked at them,
And, silently shed the tears.

On returning home we looked at the flowers,
Only the paleness remained, where once it was red.
On feeling at our breast we discovered,
Only the pain pulsated, where once beat the heart.

Sometimes an imagined collar around the neck,
At times feet felt the dance of the chains.
And, then, one day Love, just like them,
With the bond of "Rope around the neck",
Dragged us along with their caravan.

(Ghubare' Ayyam)

[17] Solitary Confinement

Far away

A light flickered on the horizon –

In the domain of mind, arose the reign of pain;

In the world of fantasy, my restlessness increased;

In the realm of solitude, the dawn arrived.

After blending my day's venom with life's gall,

I filled the bowl of my heart with that drink.

Far away

A light flickered on the horizon –

Away from my sight, bearing the news of a dawn,

Some song, some scent or some pretty maid,

Passed by the way – incensing me with hope.

After blending my day's venom with life's gall,

I endorsed my longing for the day of reunion:

In the name of the friends of this libertine – home or afar,

In the name of Earth's beauty, the grace of a human face.

(Duste' The' Sung)

(18) **Ashes and Blossoms**

Today, again,
On the string spun from grief and pain,
I threaded blossoms; drawn from your memory.

And I plucked,
From the desert of abandoned love,
Buds which bloomed; when we were together.

Then,
I placed on your doorsteps,
Offering to the days of your memory.

Laid,
Side by side, in the vase called Desire,
The ashes of separation, the blossoms from our love.

(Ghubare`Ayyam)

[19] **Look at the town from here**

If you

Look at the town from here:

In concentric circles

– like a jail –

There are walls all around.

Every path – some prisoner's footmarks;

But,

No milestone, destination,

Or a well-wisher's stand.

If someone moves too quickly,

Then one wonders:

Why has there not been

A warning shout to stop?

And,

If someone raises his hand,

Then one ponders:

Why no jingles been heard

From his manacled arms?

Look at the town from here:

In all that crowd –

No person with dignity.

No being with reason.

Every proud man

– enchained as a criminal.

Every pretty maiden

– proclaimed a slave.

Those shadows far away,

Dancing around the lamps!

It is hard to see from here

– an assembly of mourners,
or a bunch of revellers?

Those colourful images,

Scattered on the walls!

One cannot tell from here

– are they blooming flowers,
or someone's blood smears?

(Sire' Vadi' Sina)

[20] **So softly**

Footpath, shadows, trees,

destination, entrance, and the gallery.

The moon bared its breast on the balcony – so softly.

As if some beauty disrobes – so softly.

Under the balcony – the sapphirine of shadows;

The lake – an expansion of the sapphirine.

In the lake floated a bubble's leaf;

Held a while, and then it burst – so softly.

So softly, lightly, the pale coloured wine,

It was filled in my goblet – so gently.

The glass, the carafe,

The roses formed by your hands:

As if a distant shadow, in some dream,

It arose and then faded – so gently.

The heart recalled a promise – so tenderly.

You said: "Tenderly".

The Moon bowed and murmured:

"Still more tenderly".

(Duste ' The ' Sung)

[21] **Predicament**

The night's curtain and my beloved's image – before my eyes!

Once again the blood started to drip from my heart,

Once again the cautiousness has fogged my sight,

Once again the suppressed desire has enfevered my being.

(Sire' Vadi' Sina)

[22] **Elegy**

How close you are since you departed!

When were you ever this close to me?

Now neither shall you return nor leave,

How many unions and separations are, thus, entwined?

(Sire' Vadi' Sina)

(23) **Our Relationship**

How do I describe the relationship between you and me?

Narrations depicting love have no close simile.

There are many tales on union's ecstasy and separation's torment,
But this state of mine is not inscribed in any document.

This love of mine which encompasses separation and reunion,
This lingering pain, which I have carried for years.

This *secret love* which I have kept concealed from all –
“Ages have gone by since I held you in my arms”.

(Ghubare Ayyam)

(24) **Infatuation**

When

It rains on the roof,

I dream of you.

It snows on the mountain,

I dream of you.

The dawn's fairy arises,

I dream of you.

The cuckoo sends her call

I dream of you.

Birds come and depart,

I dream of you.

Fragrance sweetens the garden,

I dream of you.

The dew glows like pearls,

I dream of you.

There is an illusion in this love:

You are not a woman, but someone else!

Why should I, tell me,

Always,

Just dream of you?

(Sire' Vadi' Sina)

(Translation from Urdu, of a free interpretation by Faiz of a poem by Rasool Hamza, USSR.)

[25] **Memory**

In the desert of loneliness, my darling; quivers

The echo of your voice, the mirage of your lips.

In the desert of loneliness, beneath isolation's debris,

Are blooming jasmines and roses of your charming Self.

From somewhere close arises the warmth of your breath,

So gently it smoulders, drenched in its own scent.

Far away, across the horizon, shining like pearly drops,

Softly falls the dew from your blissful eyes.

With so much tenderness, my darling your memory has put,

Just now, its soothing hands on my turbulent heart,

It appears, although it is still the dawn of separation,

The day of parting is gone, and has come reunion's night.

(Daste' Saba)

(26) **Feel and Listen**

Is it the odour of blood,

Or the scent of my beloved's lips?

Feel –

From which direction arrives the morning breeze?

Is it the Garden greeting the Spring,

Or the Prison opening its doors?

Listen –

From which direction arises the song of glee?

(Duste ' The ' Sung)

[27] **Saints and Sinners**

They filled the taverns, or crowded the shrines –

The greedy adopted all that became vogue.

Only we are left to entertain the Preacher –

Every pretender in the town is now a saint.

(Duste ' The ' Sung)

[28] **The spring**

Nowadays,

The night ebbs,

like a subsiding surge of inebriation;

The day swells,

like the flowers, full of colours and perfume.

The goblets are empty!

Pay heed to the advent of Spring;

Fill the hearts with desire,

and, your eyes with yearning.

(Duste ' The ' Sung)

[29] **The oath and the promise**

Not only the oath to restrain;

but also, the promise to taste!

The heart urges to wander,

beyond the oath and the promise.

So much pain,

that every sinew is filled with fire;

And,

So much solace,

that I just long to expire.

(Sire ' Vadi ' Sina)

[30] **The voice**

If I am deprived of pen and paper, then what?

I have dipped the fingers in my heart's ink.

If a seal has been put on my tongue, so what?

I have put my voice in chain's every link.

(Daste' Saba)

[31] **Tonight**

Tonight, after living a night, through one night,

I have lived through the length of eternity.

Tonight, as if it were the bowl of elixir,

These hands have drunk the essence of my beloved.

(Shame' Sher' Yarañ)

[32] All the way

How long was that night of separation's agony!

With all my trust in that promise by you
I swallowed the night's bitterness, my dear love,
My dear! O' my true beloved!

With all my trust in that promise by you
I tinkled the chains as if they were cymbals,
Sometimes I put on the links as my ear-rings,*
At others I assumed that the fetters were my anklets.

For my love for you I offered the flesh from my body, **
With ravens, as the messengers, I sent you my call.
'This night soon ends, my Love shall then come."
I looked at the pathway, time and again.
None arrived, except the people with jeers,
Nothing came, but a downpour of scorn.

Today you must rebuke these scoffs, my darling;
Come to my home, my long-separated beloved.
When the dawn arises I yearn to exclaim:
"Thanks goodness, joy has come to my home again!"

"The darling whose promise I trusted without sway,
That darling, also, kept the promise all the way."

(Shame' Sher' Yarañ)

* The reference is made to the Punjabi folklore Heer-Ranjha

** The reference is made to the Punjabi folklore Sohni-Mahival

[33] O' True God

O' true God! You had decreed:

“My Man! You are the King if this world,
My bounties are now your riches,
You are my deputy and viceroy.”

After sending me away on this pretence,

Have you ever asked:

“How have you endured life, my Man?”

Have you ever enquired, O' My Lord!

How this world has treated your viceroy?

On the one hand there is intimidation by the police,

On the other there is persecution by the stewards.

This skeleton of mine carries a heart which trembles,

The way a sparrow flutters when caught in a trap.

What a King have you made? O' My Lord!

A chain of sufferings, not a moment's peace for him.

I do not wish any kingship, O' My Creator!

A bit of dignity shall suffice for me.

These palaces and mansions are not my choice,

A corner in life's fabric is all what I ask.

If you listen to me, then I will listen to you,

I swear in you name: “I shall never go astray.”

But if this demand of mine is not met by you,
Then I must also search, and find a new God.

(Shame´ Sher´ Yarañ)